

Appl. No. 09/213,510
Amdt. dated November 18, 2003
Reply to Office Action of May 18, 2004

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

In the Office Action, claims 1-2, 4-8 and 9-16 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as unpatentable over Pasco, US Patent No. 4,323,951, in view of Ogura et al, US Patent No. 5,915,822, Cremers et al, US Patent No. 5,578,985 and Abileah et al, US Patent No. 5,629,784 on the grounds set forth in the Office Action.

The following argument is presented, in view of the foregoing amendment, to overcome the foregoing rejections and to obtain allowable subject matter in the claims.

It is noted that the subject matter in the last paragraph of each of the independent claims 1, 11 and 16 was added subsequent to a telephone interview (conducted July 31, 2003) with the Examiner, wherein the Examiner indicated that he had not considered the aspect of the construction with the two light sources. The subject matter of the light sources was added in an attempt to distinguish over the teachings of the cited art so as to secure allowable subject matter. However, as is evident from the present Office Action (dated May 18, 2004), the inclusion of this subject matter of the two light sources, did not overcome the rejections and did not provide allowable subject matter in the claims. Accordingly, in the present response, this subject matter of the two light sources has been deleted from the independent claims 1, 11 and 16, and is presented in new dependent claims 17, 18 and 19 that depend respectively from claims 1, 11 and 16.

It is urged that there is no motivation to combine the teachings of Pasco in view of Ogura, and that any combination of these teachings would not suggest the construction of the present invention by a person skilled in the art because Pasco teaches use of a non-changeable display with non-changeable characters. The Pasco display is a dark display with light characters, this resulting in an illuminated presentation having good contrast against the dial.

In Ogura, an illuminated pointer is located in front of an illuminated dial. The person skilled in the art understands that the dial plate itself is dark and only the characters are illuminated to receive a good contrast so that the pointer is ready to be recognized. This pointer is used in a car, and the driver of the car must not be distracted by watching the speedometer for too long.

Ogura teaches one to use an LCD device independently of the rest of the display with no continuous surface so that there is no suggestion of providing a continuous surface. Therefore, claims 1, 11 and 16 are not obvious by the combination of Ogura and Pasco.

Cremers teaches one to place the dial assembly and LCD displays in different planes, this teaching leading away from the independent claims.

Furthermore, it is noted that claim 1 states that the front surface of the liquid crystal screen is in the same plane as the front surface of the optical waveguide. Prior to the present amendment, claim 1 states also that the front surface of the liquid crystal screen contacts the front surface of the optical

waveguide to form therewith a continuous surface. As noted from the aforementioned interview, as well as from the present amendment, the Examiner does not regard this recital of claim 1 to distinguish over the combination of Ogura (who shows an LCD as part of a display with a dial, Figs. 2 and 3) with Pasco (who shows a planar display plus a dial, Figs. 1 and 2).

Possibly, the Examiner applies the teachings of the cited art to claim 1 as follows. Ogura (Fig. 3) shows the front surface of the LCD to be coplanar with the front surface 13a of the light transmitting board 13. The LCD contacts the front surface 13a via a continuous sinuous surface. Apparently, the interconnection by the sinuous surface of Ogura, which is in the nature of a groove, rather than by the planar surface shown in present figures 2-6, is believed to be a proper interpretation of claim 1 by the Examiner.

In order to avoid such a misreading of claim 1, claim 1 is amended in the present response to state that the front surface of the liquid crystal screen contacts the front surface of the optical waveguide to form therewith a continuous planar surface. Introduction into claim 1 of the "continuous planar surface" distinguishes over the sinuous surface of Ogura.

The continuous planar surface rules out the groove of Ogura, and is an important distinction over the prior art, as may be appreciated from the following passages in the present specification and drawing. The present specification (page 1, lines 5-20) discloses that the combination of a dial plate plus a display has been used in motor vehicles, but that the presence of a gap (such as the aforementioned groove of Ogura) between the transparent region and the display introduces a disadvantage.

To overcome the foregoing disadvantage, the present invention is constructed such that the polarization filter 10 of the front panel 8 is arranged in the same plane as the film 6 of the dial plate 1 (specification on page 5 at lines 22-24), and that the resulting display unit has a smooth surface (line 25) as is portrayed in each of Figs. 2-6. An embodiment of the invention is described as having a common film 14 (lines 33-39). Another embodiment is said to have a common smooth surface (page 6 at lines 5-9). Yet another embodiment has a dial plate 1 connected to a polarization filter 25 of a liquid crystal screen 2 (page 6 at lines 23-25). These embodiments, as shown in Figs. 2-6, have a planar surface connecting the LCD to the dial region of the display unit and, in particular, do not have a groove or gap, as is presented in Ogura. Accordingly, it is urged that introduction of the word "planar" is supported by the present specification and the drawing figures, and clearly distinguishes over the teachings of the cited art.


The foregoing argument for claim 1 applies also to the independent claims 11 and 16. Both of claims 11 and 16 have been amended by inclusion of the term "planar" in a fashion corresponding to the amendment of claim 1, and are believed to distinguish over the teachings of the cited art for the reasons presented above for claim 1. Therefore, all of the independent claims and their respective dependent claims are believed to be allowable.

In the event there are further issues remaining the Examiner is respectfully requested to telephone attorney to reach agreement to expedite issuance of this application.

Applicants respectfully request that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

Since the present claims set forth the present invention patentably and distinctly, and are not taught by the cited art either taken alone or in combination, this amendment is believed to place this case in condition for allowance and the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the matter, enter this amendment, and to allow all of the claims in this case.

Respectfully submitted,
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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING UNDER 37 CFR SECTION 1.8(a)

I hereby certify that the accompanying Amendment is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patent, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on November 18, 2004.

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